MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) and (b) Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thiruvananthapuram is the lead Centre for launch vehicle technology development. Currently, the ongoing programmes in VSSC consist of production of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), development of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and advanced R&D needed for future.

Suitable augmentation/modernisation of various facilities and restructuring of various activities needed for these programmes are done on a continuous basis. Necessary funds are being provided as and when required.

Biddings for exploration of oil and natural gas

1908. DR. B. B. DUTTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of bidding invited by Government for exploration of oil and natural gas so far;

(b) the number of blocks awarded on the basis of these biddings; and

(c) the number, out of these, which have been located in the North-Eastern region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Since 1980, Government of India has invited offers for exploration of oil and gas under 8 exploration bidding rounds and one joint venture exploration programme.

(b) Government of India has awarded a total of 26 blocks so far under these offers.

(c) No contract has been awarded so far for any block located in North-Eastern region.

Divesting the Discretionary Powers of Ministers

1909. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI:

Will the Minister of PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have recently divested the Ministers of his Council of discretionary powers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether any exception has been made in case of Minister for Communications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) to (c) Government have decided to abolish all discretionary quotas hitherto enjoyed by the Ministers in all the Ministries/Departments. It has also been decided that in areas where it is considered absolutely necessary to make a small number of out-of-turn allotments, Ministries/Departments should formulate clear rules and guidelines and make arrangements for making the out-of-turn allotments by a Committee specially set up for this purpose. The necessary directives have been issued in this matter on 18.7.1996.

गावों को बारहमासी सड़कों से जोड़ा जाना

1910. **श्री राम जेठमलानी:** क्या ग्रामीण क्षेत्र और रोजगार मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि देश में 1000 से अधिक की आबादी वाले गांव अभी तक भी समीपतम बारहमासी सड़कों से जुड़े हुए नहीं हैं;

(ख) मार्च 1996 के अन्त तक समीपतम बारहमासी सड़कों के साथ जुड़े 1000 लोगों की आबादी वाले गांवों की प्रतिशतता क्या थी;

(ग) क्या सरकार ने विशेष गांवों को समीपतम बारहमासी सड़कों से जोड़ने के लिये कोई समयबद्ध योजना तैयार की है;

(घ) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है और यदि नहीं, तो उसके क्या कारण हैं; और

(ङ) 1000 लोगों की आबादी वाले गांवों को बारहमासी सड़कों से कब तक जोड़ दिया जायेगा?

ग्रामीण क्षेत्र और रोजगार मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री चद्रदेव प्रसाद वर्मा): (क) और (ख) न्यूनतम आवश्यकता कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत मार्च, 1995 तक 1000 तथा उससे ऊपर की जनसंख्या वाले लगभग 85 प्रतिशत गांवों को सम्पर्क सड़कों से जोड़ने का अनुमान लगाया गया था।

(ग) से (ङ) आठवीं योजना (1992-97) में योजना के अन्त तक 1000 तथा उससे ऊपर की जनसंख्या वाले सभी गांवों को बारहमासी सड़कों से जोड़ने पर विचार किया गया।

Financial Help to Municipal Corporations

1911. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA SWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to extend financial help to Municipal Corporations on a no-interest or low interest basis;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Municipal Administrations have a very small tax base;

(d) in what manner Government propose to help the Municipalities to meet the legitmate needs of the people; and

(e) the steps proposed to encourage Municipalities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) As per Entry 5 of the State list of the Constitution, Municipalities is a State subject. The details of the taxes to be imposed by the Municipalities and their other financial powers are contained in the Municipal Acts of the concerned State. Keeping in view the weak financial position of the Municipalities, sufficient provisions have already been made in the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992. The Municipal Acts amended or enacted in persuance of the above Act provide details of the taxes and other Financial Powers of Municipalities. The State Governments have also constituted their State Finance Commission to review the financial position of Urban Local Bodies. As far as Government of India is concerned, no direct financial assistance is provided to Urban Local Bodies, this being a State subject.

Houses for Urban Poor in Madhya Pradesh and Assam

1912. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of urban poor provided with houses in Madhya Pradesh and Assam under various Central schemes during the last three years, district-wise; and

(b) the total amount earmarked and spent on such schemes during the above period and the agency/agencies engaged in implementing these schemes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU): (a) and (b) At present, there is no Centrally sponsored scheme for providing houses to the urban poor. Housing being a State subject, State Governments are formulating and implementing housing schemes for various target groups as per their plan priorities out of State plan outlay supplemented through institutional finance from HUDCO.

District-wise details of housing schemes for urban poor (EWS) sanctioned by HUDCO during the last three years in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Assam are given in Statements-I and II respectively.